

## Message Text

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17/21

ACTION SS-25

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R 121436Z FEB 76 CORRECTED COPY FOR MCN

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8579

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1369

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ASEC, PINS, PFOR, LE

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT FRANGIE ON CURRENT SITUATION AND GALLAGHER/  
DYKES

REF: BEIRUT 1224; STATE 30980

1. I CALLED ON PRESIDENT FRANGIE MORNING FEBRUARY 12  
ACCOMPANIED BY ACTING DCM (ECONOMIC/COMMERCIAL COUNSELOR)  
WARING FRANGIE ASKED ABOUT AMBASSADOR GODLEY'S HEALTH AND  
EXPRESSED HIS WISHES FOR A SPEEDY RECOVERY.

2. I EXPRESSED CONGRATULATIONS ON BEHALF OF THE U.S.  
GOVERNMENT ON HIS SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS TO DATE IN THE  
SEARCH FOR AN EQUITABLE AND LASTING POLITICAL SOLUTION. "ENSHALLAH",  
HE REPLIED, THESE NEGOTIATIONS WILL CONTINUE TO GO WELL.  
HE DID NOT RESPOND TO MY GAMBIT MENTIONING YESTERDAY'S  
CABINET MEETING BEYOND A GENERAL NEGATIVE TO INDICATE  
NO DECISIONS HAD BEEN TAKEN THERE. HE SAID THE  
DISCUSSION OF THE AGREEMENT WOULD TAKE PLACE AT THE  
SPECIAL CABINET MEETING ON SATURDAY. HE DID NOT  
REALLY IMPLY ONE WAY OR THE OTHER WHETHER AN AGREEMENT  
WOULD BE ANNOUNCED FOLLOWING THAT MEETING. HE DID  
MENTION, HOWEVER, THAT THE "SYRIANS" (I.E. KHADDAM,  
SHIHABI AND JAMIL) WILL BE COMING SATURDAY OR SUNDAY.  
HE EXPRESSED HIS SATISFACTION IN A GENERAL WAY WITH HIS  
TRIP TO DAMASCUS AND THE ATTITUDE OF THE SYRIANS.

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3. FOLLOWING SOME MORE PLEASANTRIES, I TACKLED THE GALLAGHER AND DYKES CASE. PRESIDENT HAD BEEN BRIEFED TUESDAY (FEBRUAGZ 10) BY SURETE DIRECTOR COL. DAHDAH, AS HE SAID DAHDAH HAD BEEN BRIEFING HIM REGULARLY WHEN HE SAW HIM EVERY TUESDAY. PRESIDENT SAID PFLP IS DEMANDING A RANSOM OF WEAPONS. THIS CAUSES SERIOUS PROBLEM OF PRINCIPLE. WERE THE GOVERNMENT TO GIVE IN, MORE KIDNAPPINGS COULD FOLLOW IN THE MANNER SO WIDESPREAD AT PRESENT IN SOUTH AMERICA. HE DID NOT SEE HOW GOLL COULD TAKE THAT COURSE. HE ASKED SOME OTHER QUESTIONS, IN THE COURSE OF WHICH WARING CLARIFIED THAT PFLP HAS NEVER DEALT DIRECTLY WITH US AND IS WELL AWARE OF OUR OWN POLICY AGAINST RANSOM. WARING ALSO NOTED THE SLIGHT DISTINCTION INVOLVED IN AREMS PFLP WANTED IN THAT THEY WERE ARMS SEIZED FROM THEM BY THE STATE, BUT FRANGIE DID NOT RESPOND.

4. I TOLD FRANGIE WE UNDERSTOOD HIS ARGUMENT ABOUT RANSOM SINCE IT IS PRECISELY OUR OWN RATIONALE FOR WORLD-WIDE POLICY AGAINST RANSOM IN KIDNAPPING CASES. HOWEVER, WE ARE FACED WITH PROBLEM OF TWO KIDNAPPED DIPLOMATS AND LACK OF SECURITY FOR ALL OUR OTHER DIPLOMATS IN LEBANON AS LONG AS THEIR RELEASE HAD NOT BEEN OBTAINED BY GOL. I RECALLED THEY HAD BEEN SEIZED ABOUT FOUR MONTHS AGO BY A LEBANESE GROUP -- THAT OF ISAM EL ARAB -- AND WE WERE TOLD THAT THEY WERE SUBSEQUENTLY TURNED OVER TO THE PFLP. PFLP REPRESENTATIVES ARE TAKING TWO DIFFERENT LINES WITH THOSE THEY TALK TO ON THIS CASE. ON ONE HAND THEY SAY IT IS A SMALL LEBANESE GROUP THAT IS HOLDING THEM, WHILE TO COL. DAHDAH THEY ADMIT THEY ARE UNDER PFLP CONTROL. I NOTED FROM PRESS REPORTS THAT PFLP MEMBERS HAD BEEN AMONG THOSE KIDNAPPED AND PRESUMABLY RETURNED IN EXCHANGE FOR OTHER LEBANESE RECENTLY. THEREFORE GOL HAS PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH PFLP I SAID. I HOPED OUR DIPLOMATS WOULD BE TREATED AS LEBANESE CITIZENS MIGHT BE IN SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES. FRANGIE IMMEDIATELY REPLIED THAT GOL OF COURSE RECOGNIZES ITS RESPONSIBILITY NOT ONLY FOR LEBANESE CITIZENS BUT FOR ALL RESIDENTS OF LEBANON--EXCEPT FOR THE "NAUGHTY ONES" HE ADDED WITH A TWINKLE IN HIS EYE (I.E. PALESTINIANS).  
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5. THE PRESIDENT SAID HE WOULD UNDERTAKE TWO THINGS. FIRST, HE WOULD MENTION THE CASE TO THE SYRIAN OFFICERS WHEN THEY ARRIVED ON SATURDAY OR SUNDAY, AND WOULD INFORM ME OF THIS THROUGH COL. DAHDAH. SECOND, IF THIS DID NOT WIN RELEASE OF THE MEN, HE WOULD APPROACH THE IRAQI AMBASSADOR. HE SAID WE SHOULD NOT ASK HIM TO DO APPROACH THE LIBYANS. . . WE BOTH THANKED THE PRESIDENT,

POINTING OUT USG DOES NOT HAVE FORMAL RELATIONS WITH IRAQ (TO WHICH HE REPLIED "THEY WANT TO BE IN A POSITION TO BLACKMAIL YOU BY MAKING CHARGES OF IMPERIALISM AND SUCH AGAINST YOU"), I TOLD HIM WE COUNT ON HIS HELP IN THIS MATTER. I POINTED OUT WE WERE UNDER PRESSURE FROM JOURNALISTS BUT WERE CONTINUING TO AVOID PUBLICITY ON THE CASE SO AS TO PROTECT THE MEN'S LIVES. PRESIDENT ASKED AND I TOLD HIM WE HAVE NO FIRM PROOF THE MEN ARE ALIVE, EVEN THOUGH WE, ALONG WITH COL. DAHDAH, HAVE TO ASSUME THEY ARE FROM WHAT WE ARE TOLD.

6. CALL ENDED AFTER A FEW MORE PLEASANTIRIES, WITH PRESIDENT OFFERING TO SEE ME WHENEVER I WISHED.

7. ALL THINGS CONSIDERED WE THINK IT BEST TO LET THE PRESS KNOW ABOUT THE VISIT IN OUR OWN TERMS. AFTER CHECKING WITH PRESIDENT'S CLOSES PRESS ADVISOR, RAMEZ KHAZEN, ACTING PAO PLANS TO RELEASE FOLLOWING STATEMENT TO PRESS AND NATIONAL PRESS AGENCY: QUOTE. AMERICAN CHARGE D'AFFAIRES GEORGE B. LAMBRAKIS WAS RECEIVED TODAY BY PRESIDENT SULEIMAN FRANGIE AND EXPRESSED TO HIM USG'S BEST WISHES FOR CONTINUED SUCCESS IN HIS EFFORTS TO REACH AN EQUITABLE AND LASTING SOLUTION TO THE LEBANESE CRISIS. END QUOTE.

8. COMMENT: THIS MEETING ACCOMPLISHED THREE THINGS IN GALLAGHER AND DYKES CASE. FIRST, IT CONFIRMED OUR GROWING SUSPICION THAT PRES FRANGIE HIMSELF DOES NOT APPROVE RETURN OF RIFLES IN EXCHANGE FOR THE MEN. I AM INTERESTED IN WHAT PREIMIER KRAHE WILL HAVE TO SAY ON THE SUBJECT BUT DO NOT HAVE ANY GREAT HOPE THAT AVENUE WILL BE PURSUED BYYGOL. SECOND, FRANGIE WILL ALSO WEIGH IN WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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SYRIANS, THIRD, FRANNIE HAS UNDERTAKEN MAKE DIRECT PERSONAL APPROACH TO IRAQI AMBASSADOR SHOULD SYRIANS BE UNABLE WIN RELEASE. WE THINK THIS IS AN UNEXPECTED DIVIDEND WHICH JUST MIGHT BEAR FRUIT IN CURRENT ATMOSPHERE OF IRAQI-SYRIAN ANTAGONISM AND COMPETITION. LAMBRAKIS

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